Origin of Decay

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**Introduction**

What comes to mind when you think of a teenager? Many adults probably consider the majority of modern teens to be rebellious, disrespectful, lazy, or even apathetic. The terms “OMG” and “IDK” probably conjure images of teens texting and talking after school, seemingly without even noticing that the world exists. It hasn’t always been this way, however. From 1969-1974, ABC aired a sitcom called *The Brady Bunch.* The premise of the show is fairly simple: Carol Martin (Florence Henderson), who has three daughters, is widowed and marries Mike Brady (Robert Reed), who already has three sons. It is never mentioned how Carol came to be single. If one watches *The Brady Bunch,* one will notice that the children, several of whom are teens, are depicted as polite, helpful, respectful, etc. Assuming that media reflects the times, one can surmise that teens at the time were considered to be polite, helpful, etc. This means that somewhere along the line, there was a shift in the attitude towards teenagers. Since modern teens are often associated with excessive communication, as well as technology proficiency, it is natural to assume that these associations began with the creation of this technology. Let’s look at the two big ones: cell phones and the internet. It is difficult to say exactly when the internet was created, but the creation started in the 1960s with a government research project, and was completed sometime in the early 1990s. The first patent for a mobile phone as we now know it was first issued in 1969. One may notice that these technologies were released at about the same time. Many people give the name “Generation Y”, or “Millenials”, to people born during this time period, which stretched from the late 1970s to the early 1990s. In this work, it will be argued that this generation is the beginning of the decay of modern youth.

**Why Not Gen X?**

As noted in the introduction, the first mobile phone patent was issued in 1969, significantly before the “late 70s through early 90s” birth threshold for the millenials. Also, *Pong,* the first commercially successful video game, was released in 1972, slightly before the millennial threshold. These two dates both fall into the “Generation X” range of 1961-1981. Also known as the baby bust, this generation is the offspring of the baby boomers, and the parents of the millenials. Given that cell phone technology and video games (both being things associated with millenials) were created during the Gen-X threshold, some may argue that Gen-X is the origin of the decay of modern youth. However, since these technologies were introduced *during* Gen-X, they were not as powerful as they are today. By the time these and similar technologies developed, Gen-X would have built up the responsibility of their parents, and would have viewed them as tools, rather than toys. (The obvious exception being video games) This is especially true of cell phones, which were cumbersome and expensive at first, and were originally only expected to “take off” with traveling salespeople. The millenials, however, have grown up with these technologies being both more accessible and more powerful, thus taking them for granted.

**Millenials in the Workplace**

Millennials like to feel that they contribute to the process of the working business itself. They appreciate being praised and enjoy the feeling of accomplishment. Motivation goes a long way with the millennials. They will continue to try their best if they feel that they are generally helping the industry and the business. If the millennials are not being supported for their effort in the work place they will lose self-confidence, and not give positive performances.

Giving millennials tasks to do at work will give them more self-confidence, and allow them to have a feeling that their employer trusts them and that they are responsible. The millennials will respond with gratitude and will most likely successfully complete what was asked of them. They are good at multitasking and are up for a challenge (Workplace 2.0: Motivating and Managing; Ron Bronson).

Millennials are used to working in groups or teams, so employers have to create a group-conducive environment. The millennials believe that working in groups helps to get the tasks accomplished faster and more efficiently. Training and mentoring millennials in teams will help them to better understand concepts (Managing Millennials: Eleven Tips for Managing Millennials**;** [Susan M. Heathfield](http://humanresources.about.com/bio/Susan-M-Heathfield-6016.htm)).

Millennials like to have an enjoyable work place and would like to be able to make friends at work, otherwise they will get bored. It is thus very important for employers to make the work environment a fun experience, with communication, but yet still have a structured environment (Managing Millennials: Eleven Tips for Managing Millennials**;** [Susan M. Heathfield](http://humanresources.about.com/bio/Susan-M-Heathfield-6016.htm)).

The paragraphs above describe modifications that employers have had to make in order to accommodate millenials in the workplace. Although these concepts may seem like no-brainers to some people today, they are vastly different from the mentality of previous generations. Before the millenials, employees earned respect by “working their tails off”, as opposed to millenials, who don’t work effectively unless they are respected. This is believed to stem from the early childhood of millenials, when they were praised for even basic expectations. Growing up, millenials are exposed to the mentality that “no one loses” and that “everyone is special”; sometimes they are even given trophies just for participating in an event. For these reasons, millenials are sometimes called “the trophy generation”. The excessive praise is believed to cause millenials to have a sense of entitlement, as well as the belief that life should be easy. This is why employers have to make accommodations for millenials, and it is the reason that millenials are frowned upon for being lazy (Managing Millennials: Eleven Tips for Managing Millennials**;** [Susan M. Heathfield](http://humanresources.about.com/bio/Susan-M-Heathfield-6016.htm)).

**Media Effect on Millennials**

Now a day’s many millennials use various forms of media as a way of communication and entertainment. New technologies are developed daily, consuming millennials into a form of lifestyle only consisting of these materials. The constant use of internet activity eliminates the common face-to-face communication. Millennials are cooped up in the life of Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, etc. and it doesn’t allow them to live their lives. Even though these applications help with communications among friends and family, millennials find themselves spending hours on the computer a day rather than being outside enjoying their time.

The media demonstrates life to these millennials. The news shown on television states others people’s beliefs and millennials feel the need to conform and choose one side, instead of having their own viewpoint. It is important that millennials start to form their own common beliefs because when the other generations disappear or when newer generations are born they can compare the beliefs or the millennials to past generations and form their own opinions on certain topics of the world; therefore creating diversity among many types of people from or within every generation (USA Today; Sharon Jayson).

According to Jeffrey Jensen Arnett the millennials are the generation containing the highest potential. This assumption is based mainly upon the fact that most of this generation has achieved a higher level of education since some people included in past generations did not even complete their high school education. Many opportunities are currently available for the millennial generation. Even though millennials are thought to have the most potential it may be corrupted due to the increasing impact of the internet and other technologies. Linda Walter believes that there is a decline in face-to-face communication among this generation. Walter said, “Even though they're with their peers, they're wrapped up in electronic conversations, and they lose track of body language and those signals that are around to what's happening… They sort of block them out."(USA Today; Sharon Jayson).

Even teenagers themselves within the millennial generation agree that the internet is a big part of the millennial’s lives and also the way it impacts their lives for the better. Jaime Bergerson, a 17 year old high school senior, started a group called Teens4Peace which gives high school students a way to be socially involved in issues around the world. Bergerson gave a statement regarding the impact of the internet on her organization saying, “The Internet is the only way to basically contact people across the nation… That's the way we've started our chapters in California or Florida or Boston." She created a website for her organization and created Facebook and MySpace accounts which became very popular with the targeted generation all over the country (USA Today; Janet Kornblum).

# Statistics show that about 77% of the millennial generations are online daily. The technological advances made over the years have drastically impacted this percentage, compared to the impact on the other generations. Three out of four teenagers are online and this stat will most likely increase over time due to the advancing technology discoveries. The majority of time spent on the internet by this generation is used for entertainment purposes (GENERATION Y - THE MILLENNIALS).

**Conclusion**

At this point, it should be clear that millenials are the origin of the decay of modern youth. First, it has been pointed out that the technologies associated with decayed youth (cell phone, videogames, etc.) were introduced *just before* the millennial threshold, making the millenials the first generation to take these technologies for granted. Next, it was shown that unlike generations before the millenials, excessive praise from childhood causes millenials to require praise and respect to function as adults. Since there is little evidence of similar occurrences in earlier generations, it is apparent that this started with the millenials (who, in turn, are likely to spread adulation to future generations, continuing the decay). Furthermore, it was pointed out that millenials spend a great deal of time on the internet, reinforcing the validity of the first argument. From these arguments, it should be clear that modern youth’s decay started with the millenials. With increasing technology and an ever easier lifestyle, we can only assume that this trend will continue into future generations. It is therefore the responsibility of the millenials to “carry the torch” forward, towards progress, to not be corrupted by technology, but to use their potential to advance technology.

“That’s all I got to say about that.”